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# PARTICIPATION OF RURAL WOMEN IN MGNREGA IN SHIMLA DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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## *ABSTRACT*

*Participation of people for whom the programmers are undertaken plays a significant role in the discourse of the rural development practitioner and policy makers. Women's participation in labor force is comparatively very low as compared to men. Many constraints and challenges have made women life under men's dominance. Women can be the part of workforce if they get access to employability. Women comprise of half of the country's population, yet, they have limited control over income. The Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is extremely progressive act enacted in India after independence. It is right to work as a legal entitlement. The basic objective of this study is to explain and analyze the participation of rural women in MGNREGA in the study area. The present study is both primary and secondary based. This study has been carried out in the Mashobra Block of Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh because this block has the highest number of women workers registered under MGNREGA. 401 women respondents were selected randomly. The results showed that MGNREGA is providing gainful employment to rural women and their participation has increased significantly during the past years. The paper will also highlight major shortcomings regarding women's awareness about the Act. The results suggest a need for immediate rectifications of some of the flaws observed during the field work to make MGNREGA more effective.*

***KEYWORDS*:** *Rural Women, MGNREGA, Participation, Awareness*

## INTRODUCTION

The Government of India has initiated various employment generation programmers since independence. Participation of people for whom the programmers are undertaken plays a significant role in the discourse of the rural development practitioner and policy makers. Women's participation in labor force is comparatively very low as compared to men. Many constraints and challenges have made women life under men's dominance. Women can be the part of workforce if they get access to employability. In a county with long traditional influences embarked on women from the very young age, it is essential to come out of these barriers. Women comprise of half of the country's population, yet, they have limited control over income.

The Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is extremely progressive act enacted in India after independence. It is right to work as a legal entitlement. Government of India initiated a new employment generation scheme in 2005 which is called National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). It was a significant way towards the realization of the 'right to work' and to extent the livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG NREGA) is one of the most progressive legislations enacted since independence. The significance of MGNREGA is evident from a variety of observations and

interpretations. Mainly, it is an exclusive employment generation and an effective demand driven employment programme of rural India which is an essential requirement for the fulfilment of other basic rights- the Right to Life, the Right to Food and Right to Education. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, enacted on 25th August 2005, guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act has come into force with effect from February 2, 2006 in 200 districts in the first phase, 330 districts in the second phase in 2007-08 and extended to all the rural districts of India from the financial year 2008-09. Gender equity and empowerment has been recognized by the architects of MGNREGA and included women participation as integral component in its design. Various provisions under the Act and its Guidelines aim to ensure that women have equitable and easy access to work, decent working conditions, equal payment of wages and representation on decision-making bodies. MGNREGA extended an important work opportunity for women who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed though comprise half of the community (Sharma, 2017).

**Manresa in Himachal Pradesh**

In Himachal Pradesh, initially the MGNREGA was started in District Chambal and Sirmaur weft. 2nd Feb, 2006 in 1st Phase, District Kangra and Mandi were covered we've. 1st April 2007 in 2nd Phase and remaining 8 Districts viz. Ballarpur, Hamirpur, Kinnaur, Kula, Lahaul and Spite, Shimla, Sloan and Unawere covered weft. 1st April 2008 in 3rd Phase.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to complete the study, various studies and researches were reviewed regarding participation of rural women in MGNREGA. Some of the studies are mentioned below:

**Rukmini (2015)** in her article "MGNREGA reduced poverty, empowered women" indicated that MGNREGS is the first opportunity for many women to earn cash income. As a result, there was a substantial increase in women's control over resources including cash in hand and the likelihood of having a bank account and improvement in women's ability to make independent decisions about their health.

**Karthika(2015)** in her paper, "Impact of MGNREGA on Socio-Economic Development & Women Empowerment" discussed the benefits of MGNREGA and its implementation. In this paper 100 respondents were selected through convenience sampling from the area of Mangalam Gram Panchayath of Kerala to study the impact of mgnrega on socio-economic development and women empowerment. The study revealed that women workers are the major participants of this scheme. Further, MGNREGA has a great role and impact on the rural development in coming future and it is better to expand this program in other relevant area like agriculture, industry, construction etc.

**Bhatand Mariyappan (2016) in** their study "Impact of MGNREGA and Women Participation" examined the impact of MGNREGA and the participation of female beneficiaries in Wahipora village panchayat of Kupwara District" which was predominantly based on the primary data which was collected from the 60 selected respondents by applying the Random sampling method. The programme has created self-confidence among unskilled workers mainly in females by providing 100 days of wage employment and by giving the priority that one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women. MGNREGA provides remuneration directly in the hands of beneficiaries particularly to women without any middleman. The study also revealed the few challenges in the management process of MGNREGA in the study region which demands proper initiatives and solutions by the implementing agency.

**Kaushaland Singh (2016)** in their paper, "A study of Women Participation in MGNREGA in Himachal Pradesh" explored the reach and impact of MGNREGA on economic empowerment of rural women particularly in Himachal Pradesh. The study revealed that women participation in MGNREGA is increasing with the passage of time and they are sharing financial burden with men in shouldering family responsibilities. However, a need is felt to improve awareness amongst women and timely payments to beneficiaries will add up to the success of scheme.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the different aspects of participation of rural women in MGNREGA.
- To examine the level of awareness amongst rural women about the provisions of MGNREGA in the study area.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through questionnaires/schedules. And secondary has been collected from publication of various bodies data published by research investigators, data published by technical journals and various necessary websites and periodicals. Collected data has been tabulated in systematic way and treated them with different statistical methods.

### Sample Design

The State of Himachal Pradesh has been selected because the research done so far in respect of the empowerment of rural women through MGNREGA is so scanty. Multi-stage sampling process was adopted for selecting the sample of the study. Himachal Pradesh consists of 12 districts but keeping in view the geographical and topological setting, the present study has been confined to Shimla District of the State because MGNREGA was started in the State in three phases and Shimla district was one of the districts chosen for implementation in the third phase. There are 10 development blocks in Shimla dstrict. Out of 10 blocks, Mashobra block was selected for the study because the area is socio-culturally homogeneous with a sizeable population of women working under MGNREGA. Mashobra block is divided into 45 panchayats, only 20 percent were selected randomly which were 9 panchayats and hence 401 women respondents were selected randomly from these 9 panchayats.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the collection of data, the information was classified, tabulated and interpreted in simple frequency and statistical operation. Hence, the findings are given below.

### PARTICIPATION OF RURAL WOMEN IN MGNREGA

**Table 1: Got Job After Submission of Application**

| Sr. No. | Got Job after submission of application | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yes | 390 | 97.26 |
| 2. | No | 11 | 2.74 |
| Total | | 401 | 100.00 |
| **Source:** Field Survey | | | |

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (97.26 percent) got job after submission of application for work whereas 2.74 percent of the respondents did not get the job after submission of application for work. This shows that

people are generally provided work as per the stipulated period prescribed under the Act. Further, those 11 respondents who did not get the job on time replied that they did not get any unemployment allowance.

**Table 2: Participation of Rural Women in MGNREGA Has Increased During the Past Years**

| S. No. | Participation has increased during the Past Years | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yes | 398 | 99.25 |
| 2. | No | 03 | 0.75 |
| **Total** | | 401 | 100.00 |

**Source:** Field Survey

Table 2 indicates that a very vast majority of the respondents (99.25 percent) are of the view that participation of rural women in MGNREGA has increased during **the** past years and 0.75 percent respondents are of the view that rural women's participation in MGNREGA has not increased during the past years. Those who are of the opinion that women's participation has increased during the past years stated that reason behind the increased participation is the favourable work conditions that this scheme has provided to rural women and they get the work at their doorstep.

**Table 3: Whether the Changes Have Occurred in Rural Women's Lives Due to MGNREGA**

| S. No. | Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yes | 399 | 99.50 |
| 2. | No | 02 | 0.50 |
| **Total** | | 401 | 100 |

**Source:** Field Survey

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents (99.50 percent) are of the view that due to MGNREGA changes have taken place in different aspects of rural women lives as MGNREGA has played a commendable role in the economic empowerment of rural women as it provides women easy work which involves less hard work and they get wages at par with males and the worksite is also available at their own villages. Further, it provides them 100 days guaranteed wage work and 0.50 percent stated that no changes have taken place in different aspects of rural women's lives because it has increased their burden as now they have to work at home and in MGNREGA. The wage rates are also very low in MGNREGA.

## AWARENESS LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS ABOUT THE PROVISIONS UNDER MGNREGA

**Table 4: Respondents' Awareness about the Provisions under MGNREGA**

| Contents of Awareness | Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Employment provided within 15 days of submission of application for work | Yes<br>No | -<br>401 | -<br>100% |
| Unemployment Allowances | Yes<br>No | -<br>401 | -<br>100% |
| Provision of dated and signed receipt when apply for work | Yes<br>No | -<br>401 | -<br>100% |
| Provision of drinking water, crèche and medical facility at the worksite | Yes<br>No | -<br>401 | -<br>100% |
| Awareness about Social Audit and RTI | Yes<br>No | -<br>401 | -<br>100% |
| **Total** | | 401 | 100% |

**Source**: Field Survey

Table 4 indicated that cent percent respondents in the study are were not aware about the basic provisions or entitlements available in the Act. All the respondents had no knowledge that if they apply for work, employment should be

given within 15 days of submission of application for work. All the respondents had no knowledge that if they don't get employment within 15 days of submission of application they are entitled to have unemployment allowances. The cent percent respondents had no knowledge that when they apply for work, they should get a dated and signed receipts because they have full faith in the panchayatpradhan of that area. Further, all the respondents stated that they don't know the provisions of drinking water, crèche and medical facilities at the worksite although they stated that drinking water and medical facilities are there but they have never witnessed crèche facility at the worksite. This shows that the level of awareness of rural women in the study area is very low despite the fact MGNREGA was implemented in the year 2008.

## OTHER FINDINGS

As the study was conducted exclusively on rural women beneficiaries to know the impact of MGNREGA on their life hence, all the 401 respondents were women. Age wise distribution showed that majority (24.94 percent) of the women respondents were in the age group of 34-41 years old and majority (71.07 percent) were married, Education wise distribution showed that majority (25.44 percent) were educated up to Middle level. Caste wise distribution shows that majority (52.37 percent) belonged to Rajput's. In the study, it has also been found that majorities (62.59 percent) of the respondents were from nuclear families and majority (49.87 percent) had puce structure of their houses.

## SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- No matter how good a programme is, there is always scope for improvisation. However, there is scope of improvement in participation of women on a larger scale and hence some recommendations can be put forward for ensuring better participation of women in MGNREGA. The study highlighted certain areas where further intervention and advocacy are required so that the very essence of the Act is not lost.
- Policies must be gender sensitive which includes consideration of women-specific needs, such as child care. The availability of child care facilities is one of the factors influencing the extent of women's participation in employment strategies such as NREGA and the quality of their work. There is lack of crèche facility as seen in the study area of Himachal Pradesh which is the major shortcoming of this Act despite the fact provision of crèche facility is provided under the Act. The Government should keep check on these kind of issues because lack of crèche facility is the major impediment amongst young rural women mother workers. Child care services are a must for eliciting women's participation
- Under the provisions of MGNREGA, one family is eligible for one job card which hinders the female to complete 100 days work because altogether 100 days are provided to one family so it was seen in the study area that women want separate job cards to the married couples irrespective of living in a joint family. If every married couple will be issued different job cards, then more women can participate under MGNREGA.
- Women are completely unaware about the social audit and RTI in the study area. Social Audit should carry out in regular intervals of time. Several actions should be taken for the better and effective functioning of MGNREGA. Social Audit and RTI can aware people to get information about irregularities and corruption in the implementation of the scheme. It is very essential to run awareness campaigns regarding social audit and RTI so that women get acquainted towards their rights. Provision for social audit at the panchayat level on a regular basis can play a significant role.

- There should be continuous efforts towards creating adequate awareness on different provisions of MGNREGS amongst the people especially women. Creating awareness is necessary not only to motivate the people to work under the scheme but also to encourage them to participate in its planning and implementation.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that despite the challenges faced by women as MGNREGA workers, the programmer is generally viewed as positive, which might be a result of an increase in employment opportunities. MGNREGA has transformed the lives of many rural women. Women were lagging behind because they did not have the power to change their inferior status, but now that power lies in their hands. It is clear from the above analysis that MGNREGA has increased women's accessibility to economic activities and hence enhanced their economic independence. Thus, if the awareness among the rural women is increased, then the Act has the potential for being a role model everywhere in India.

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